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New York

President: Mr. Udovenko ..... (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 59 *(continued)*

Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters

Draft resolution (A/52/L.7)

Amendment (A/52/L.47)

Mr. Jele (South Africa): My delegation also would like to commend our two Vice-Chairmen, Ambassadors Breitenstein of Finland and Jayanama of Thailand, for the able manner in which they have guided our deliberations on the agenda item before us in the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council. I associate myself with the views expressed by the Permanent Representative of Egypt on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries during yesterday's debate.

The sessions of the Open-ended Working Group have been exhaustive, with views expressed on issues ranging from the expansion of the permanent membership category to that of the use of the veto.

It cannot be overemphasized that the fundamental goal of the current debate on the reform of the Security Council is to create a Council which is democratic and accountable to the broader membership of the Organization. Indeed, if the Security Council is to fulfil the role of custodian of peace and security envisaged for it in the Charter, it must be perceived to be legitimate by Member States and the international community. This can happen only when its composition reflects the broad membership, which has almost quadrupled since 1945, thereby making it crucial that developing States be party to decision-making in the new Council. The recent proposal by some of the five permanent member States to grant five permanent seats — two to developed and three to developing countries — would lead to a Council with an unbalanced configuration in favour of the industrialized countries: a ratio of 6 to 4.

It has also been indicated that the extension of the veto to the new members might be considered on the condition that the candidates have been clearly identified and that any increase above the figure of 20 or 21 in the number of seats to be allocated would be strongly opposed. Let me hasten to say that these proposals fail to accommodate Africa's legitimate claim to a total of five non-permanent and at least two permanent seats in the new Security Council.

South Africa believes that any attempt to allocate only one permanent seat to Africa, without the prerogatives and powers accorded to the current permanent membership, would be discriminatory and unjust. It will lead to the further marginalization of Africa, the largest regional group represented here at the United Nations. Similarly, attempts to limit the overall

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increase in the membership to a total of fewer than 26 members will constitute an under-representation of the developing countries and therefore not amount to a meaningful enlargement of the Council.

It is our view that the whole question of Security Council efficiency can be properly addressed by improving the working methods of that body rather than by limiting its expansion, because such a restriction would ignore the principle of the sovereign equality of States and the need for representation based on equitable geographical distribution, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. With regard to the issue of permanent membership, such membership without the veto would represent a merely symbolic gesture to the new members of the Council. South Africa would therefore reject the notion of inferior members that may serve without the prerogatives and privileges attached to permanent membership.

During the Open-ended Working Group sessions we have made progress in some areas. There is, for instance, a certain measure of convergence of views on the question of enlargement in the non-permanent membership category, as well as on the issue of improving the transparency in the working methods of the Security Council. Since these two areas have proved to be less contentious, it is the view of my delegation that during the ensuing sessions we should try to reach general agreement on them and then seriously focus on the issue of the size and composition of the enlarged Security Council and on the question of the veto. The working papers on the veto already submitted to the Working Group could serve as a basis for further debate leading to a decision. The veto, in terms of both its use and its extension to the new permanent members, has emerged as a critical factor in the democratization and therefore credibility of the United Nations. The question of the veto therefore must of necessity form an integral part of the whole discussion.

The debate on this agenda item has once again underscored that a Security Council which continues to be undemocratic and unrepresentative cannot by any stretch of the imagination represent the interests of the membership in its vital task of promoting and maintaining international peace and security. It is South Africa's hope, therefore, that all delegations will display the necessary flexibility and political will to achieve the desired progress in our joint undertaking to create a Security Council which is truly representative, transparent and democratic. My delegation looks forward to a constructive discussion on the issue of the reform of the Security Council when we resume our debates early next year.

Mr. Mapuranga (Zimbabwe): My delegation welcomes debate at this stage of our consideration of the important question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Security Council. This is basically because it offers us a timeous opportunity to not only take stock of and monitor our progress, but also to exchange viewpoints that might very well facilitate greater understanding and progress in our future consultations.

During the course of the year, debate on this crucial issue was further enriched by guidelines, positions and preferences emanating from the lively interchanges in the Open-ended Working Group on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Council, as well as in important meetings of various regional groups. In this connection, I wish to commend the efforts of the Co-Vice-Chairmen of the Working Group, Ambassadors Breitenstein and Jayanama.

Zimbabwe's position was vindicated, further enhanced and strengthened by the Declaration of the Twelfth Ministerial Conference of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, which was held in New Delhi in April this year, as well as by the Declaration of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) at their thirty-third ordinary session, held in Harare in June this year.

My delegation is greatly encouraged by the growing and already resounding acceptance of and agreement on the need for expansion in both the permanent and non-permanent categories of the Council's membership. An expanded Council will enjoy fresh perspectives in its deliberations and broad alliances in its decision-making, which is, after all, the purpose of our exercise — to make the Council more representative, legitimate and credible. Expansion in both categories is essential to meet the needs and views of a vast majority and wide range of Member States. It is also essential to maintain a balanced ratio between the two categories of the Council's membership.

In this regard, I wish to seize this opportunity to reiterate Africa's strong position that it should be allocated no less than two permanent seats, to be allotted to countries by a decision of the Africans themselves, in

accordance with a system of rotation based on the current established criteria of the OAU and subsequent elements which might improve upon these criteria. Africa should also be allocated five non-permanent seats in the expanded Security Council. These are not outrageous demands. These are reasonable demands based on the principle of democratic representativity on a proportional basis among the regions.

Furthermore, and in order not to perpetuate differences and discrimination among members of the Security Council, particularly in the permanent category, it is Africa's principled and cardinal position that the new permanent members should be granted the same prerogatives and powers, including the power of veto, as the current members now enjoy. This is based on the principles of non-discrimination and sovereign equality of Member States. A major flaw in the Razali proposals is that they are not guided by these cardinal principles.

The interests of all countries and regions should seriously be taken into consideration in this historic and unprecedented exercise. Any attempt to force a premature and inconclusive decision will do irreparable damage and unforgivable harm to this very sensitive process, which lies so close to the hearts of all Members of this Organization. In this regard, transparency and consensus must remain the custodians of our mutual trust and confidence in this process.

This formula is the most democratic means of increase in the permanent category, and minimizes the risk of setting discriminatory criteria for permanent membership. It is for this and other reasons that my delegation will continue to insist on the simultaneous entry of all new permanent members, and to oppose any attempts to force a decision which does not take on board Africa's interests and those of other regions.

I also wish to underline the importance we attach to the need for periodic review of the structure and functioning of the Security Council in order to enable it to respond better and more effectively to the new and dynamic challenges in international relations, especially with regard to international peace and security.

My delegation is confident that the General Assembly will continue to deal with this issue with the importance and urgency it deserves, and in the most democratic and transparent manner, consistent with the mandate it has given itself and its relevant Open-ended Working Group, which must continue its work in order to resolve all outstanding issues. I wish to assure you, Mr. President, that you will find my delegation most cooperative in this regard.

Mr. Powles (New Zealand): We have heard a considerable spectrum of views in the debate so far, and it may be timely now to attempt some observations. We all agree that the Security Council should be modernized. We also agree that the question of equitable representation and the review of the Council's working methods are of fundamental importance. It is not surprising, however, that despite the significant focus on the structural reform which the United Nations is currently undertaking, it has not so far been possible to achieve agreement on these issues. We should bear in mind that the last expansion of the Security Council took a number of years to achieve but was considerably less ambitious than that debated by the membership this time round. The current proposals for Security Council reform involve enhancing the power of some Member States vis-à-vis others.

New Zealand's aim throughout has been to seek a reform which tackles the renegotiation in a way acceptable to all, thus strengthening the Organization as a whole. Enlargement which does not enjoy the consensus support of the United Nations membership will be flawed from the start. Secondly, the process leading to the outcome must be open, honest and inclusive, in accordance with the working group process which has been established by the General Assembly.

Some months ago there was considerable uncertainty about the action the Assembly would be taking at this time. There had been a very real effort aimed at building momentum towards achieving a particular result. This, first, involved seeking agreement in principle on adding new permanent members of the Security Council. This framework resolution would then be followed by a series of further stages leading finally to the identification of these new members and to the necessary Charter amendment. But real differences of view within the membership existed. For this reason, and because we suspected that the pace of change might be forced artificially during this Assembly session, New Zealand joined over 20 other States in sponsoring the draft resolution in document A/52/L.7.

That draft resolution sought to confirm the previous pronouncements by the General Assembly that the issue is so fundamental that it is inconceivable to consider resolving it by a simple majority of those present and

voting on any particular day. It was based on the firm belief that we were, and remain, quite evidently well short of reaching general agreement about the complete issue of modernization of the Security Council. It flagged the continuing need to seek general agreement among the wider membership, without making premature decisions. If we are to reach such agreement, all Member States must be prepared to maintain open minds and move beyond the narrow pursuit of their own national interests in order to achieve the best possible outcome for the Organization as a whole. The proper course in this situation therefore has to be to continue with the working group procedure previously endorsed by this Assembly.

I think it is important to make another observation. The emphasis those seeking expansion of the permanent membership have placed on achieving that goal must not lead them, or us, to place its achievement above meaningful efforts to reform the Council's working methods and decision making — a vitally important aspect of the task before us which sadly is too often neglected.

Nevertheless, in the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Council, we have had some very useful discussions about these Cluster II issues. My observation would be that, despite the obvious temptations, these issues should not be separated from the question of equitable representation on the Council, to be treated as mere afterthoughts. They cannot be dealt with by merely exhorting the Council to take action and by effectively hiving off the veto issue into the "too-hard" basket, to be dealt with by a separate discussion group where, eventually, active consideration would undoubtedly wither away.

It is therefore particularly heartening to see that there exists among the wider membership widespread agreement on the need to strengthen the transparency and accountability of the Council. While we join others in welcoming the improvements which have recently been made in modernizing the working methods of the Council, the current proposals for enlargement fall far short of providing the necessary matching binding commitment to undertake further meaningful reform.

We nonetheless pay tribute to the efforts of those inside the Council, including Portugal, Sweden and the Republic of Korea, aimed at achieving gradual reform. This debate has demonstrated that we are still a long way from agreement, and I endorse the comments in this respect made earlier by my colleagues from Singapore and Indonesia.

New Zealand continues to believe that the regular meetings between members of the Council and troop-contributing countries could function in a more dynamic way, and we urge the Council and the Secretariat to build on the initiatives already in place.

Together with Argentina, we have also advocated the Council's full implementation of the provisions of Articles 31 and 32 of the Charter in order to achieve meaningful discussion between interested States and parties to a dispute on the one hand and members of the Council on the other. The continuing "flexible" approach to carrying out the Charter obligations and the provisional nature of the Council's rules of procedure are of particular concern to New Zealand.

Wider circulation of information and of reports prepared for the Council should be encouraged. This would go some way towards addressing the information discrepancies amongst States about situations of concern to us all.

I want to make a final observation about the veto and the Council's practice of holding informal consultations. Fifty years ago my delegation closely questioned the major Powers involved at Yalta and at Dumbarton Oaks. On 17 May 1945 we had a detailed exchange with the representative of the United Kingdom. New Zealand's then Prime Minister, Mr. Peter Fraser, asked, according to the recorded debates,

> "where the permanent member is involved, when does he commence to exercise the veto? When a permanent member is involved can he be designated as an aggressor or can nothing be done about it[?] ... [Can] a Power stop the result of an inquiry coming before the Council?"

The United Kingdom representative gave the following reply:

> "it can come before the Council and there can be a discussion of the whole case ... [T]he whole question would be investigated and discussed in the Council, and public opinion — the proceedings will be published to the world — would be in a position to make up its mind and its opinion".

In fact, the operation of the "closet veto" and the secretive nature of the informal consultations of the Security Council have meant that the understandings of 1945 were never implemented. In short, for some of us this debate is about continuing to seek implementation of the openness and transparency which small States were promised back in 1945.

Mr. Wlosowicz (Poland): The members of the United Nations have gathered in this General Assembly Hall to review their efforts to reform the Security Council to adjust this important body to contemporary political realities and to make it respond better to the challenges it is already facing, as well as those to emerge in years to come.

In the opinion of the Polish delegation, reform of the Council is crucial in our attempts to strengthen and reinvigorate the United Nations system and to make it more effective. One can hardly imagine any tangible progress in rebuilding and restructuring this Organization without substantially strengthening the Security Council's capacity to fulfil its mandate in the present international environment.

I do not think I will reveal any secrets if I say that my delegation, probably like many others, approached the current session of the General Assembly hoping for a breakthrough in the discussions on Security Council reform. It has already been a long time since its basic outlines became visible. Significant progress has been made over nearly four years of discussions held within the framework of the Open-ended Working Group.

Yet, in spite of all the efforts, which Poland has consistently encouraged, to narrow down to the extent possible the differences of views on Security Council reform, an overall compromise agreement on solutions which would be acceptable to all — I emphasize "all" — Member States still remains elusive.

So perhaps the time has come to face the question whether such a consensus is possible at all. We wonder if we can realistically hope that a further delay in taking a decision on Council reform will ever bring about the consensus for which we have expressed our preference. We have also come to ask ourselves how much time we need to see such a consensus emerge and what its basis would be.

Having carefully studied the views expressed in the course of the Working Group debates during the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, we have come to believe that the progress made in identifying the mainstream views on the reform of the Security Council seems to indicate that most Member States would be willing to lend their support to a broad concept of Security Council reform, reflecting what this majority deems important with regard to the issue in question. Moreover, it seems to us that these members see merit in focusing our further work on what they all perceive as a foundation of Security Council reform.

What does this foundation consist of? It is made up of, first, wide agreement that the Security Council should be expanded in both the permanent and non-permanent categories of its membership; secondly, a generally, I would even venture to say almost universally, held view, that while deciding on enlargement of the Security Council the Assembly should make every effort to redress the current composition of this body in order to better reflect the existing geopolitical realities; thirdly, a conviction that the working methods of the Security Council should be an indispensable part of the reform; and, fourthly, a sense of urgency. The challenges we are already facing, as well as those which the future may hold for us, make it imperative that the process of enlarging the Security Council be seen as the highest priority. The Polish delegation believes that the degree of convergence of majority views reached so far should not pass unnoticed.

Poland welcomed the proposal presented in March this year by the President of the previous session of the General Assembly and former Chairman of the Open-ended Working Group, Ambassador Razali Ismail. His initiative constituted a major attempt to move the issue of Security Council reform forward and to create a new momentum in the arduous process which, hopefully, is to lead to future negotiations to achieve general agreement on all aspects of Security Council reform. We appreciated the philosophy of the document setting out that initiative, which provided a comprehensive package of elements drawn from the views expressed by the majority of Member States. Although the paper in its entirety was not identical to our national position, we supported it out of deep conviction that at this critical juncture flexibility and readiness for compromise with regard to particular solutions are of crucial significance.

Of course, our previously expressed views concerning the most important aspects of Security Council reform, and especially the underlying principles of our position, remain valid. These views were presented in document A/AC.247/1997/CRP.9, the

position paper introduced by the Polish delegation in March this year.

Let me stress what we think transpires from the discussions we have held so far. This Organization needs the reform of Security Council, and it needs it soon. The principal objective of the reform should be to enhance the ability of the Council to discharge efficiently and effectively its primary responsibility under the Charter — to maintain international peace and security.

In our view, balanced enlargement of Security Council membership should be one of the central elements of reform. As to the size of the Council, we continue to favour an increase which would allow for an appropriate combination of permanent and non-permanent seats in the Council, fully reflecting the principle of equitable representation. We believe that the right balance in the composition of the Security Council is of key importance for its credibility and, at the same time, for maintaining its ability to operate in an efficient and timely manner. Document A/AC.247/1997/CRP.9, to which I referred earlier, also contains our position as to the preferred range of numbers.

With regard to the allocation of newly created seats, we wish to reiterate our support, for the reasons we have stated many times before, for the legitimate aspirations of Germany and Japan to permanent membership of the Security Council. Poland is also ready to cast its vote for enhanced representation of developing countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean in the Security Council, including its permanent membership category. We understand the difficulties in arriving at an acceptable solution or solutions as to the specific arrangements on how to fill the new seats, but we hope that these problems can be overcome in the not-too-distant future.

I would like to take this opportunity to clearly underline the need to ensure one additional seat for Central and Eastern Europe, a region where the number of States has more than doubled in recent years and which has a full right to claim its legitimate share in United Nations elected organs. It is our strong view that, as long as the current United Nations electoral arrangements exist, any enlargement of the Security Council should also result in an augmented representation of the regional group of Eastern European States.

Our experience as a non-permanent member of the Security Council about to end its two-year term indicates that the size and composition of the Council are not the only factors which have a direct bearing on the effectiveness of this United Nations organ. We believe that the mechanisms and working methods governing the everyday business of the Council, including the veto, are also important in that respect. We have spoken at some length about these issues on previous occasions, and we are ready to take an active part in further discussions. In general, we continue to believe that Council reform should not be limited to changes in its size and composition, however important they might be.

Today let me address just one issue which seems pertinent in this context, namely, the question of cooperation of the Security Council with regional organizations and arrangements in the sense of Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter. We believe that the time has come to give more consideration to a growing tendency among some of these entities to assume increased responsibility for maintaining peace and stability in their respective regions. In general, Poland supports this trend. We believe that the Security Council should pursue cooperation and develop contacts with such organizations. All the partners, as well as the parties to the disputes or conflicts, can only benefit from a more defined division of work between the Security Council and the international organizations and arrangements, as well as from more openness in their mutual contacts. In our view, these contacts should allow for a fruitful exchange of their unique experience and expertise.

While advocating the initiatives to give a new impulse to such cooperation, it is important to stress that the primary role of the Security Council as prescribed in the United Nations Charter should be maintained, and that the organizations in question should strictly follow the provisions of the Charter regulating international efforts aimed at maintaining peace and security.

For its part, Poland, which in January 1998 will be assuming the function of Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), will make every effort to advance the cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE. We believe that such cooperation is especially desirable in view of the fact that several regional issues dealt with by the OSCE also fall within the purview of the Security Council agenda. Poland would like to see the synergy of the efforts undertaken by those two international bodies to resolve the regional problems that are of common interest.

In conclusion, let me say that the Polish delegation is looking forward to the next session of the Open-ended Working Group, and is ready to contribute to further and decisive progress in its work, which is much needed.

Mr. Rodríguez Parilla (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me, through you, Sir, to thank the Bureau of the Open-ended Working Group on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Security Council. I should like in particular to thank the two Vice-Chairmen of the Group, the Permanent Representatives of Finland and of Thailand, for their praiseworthy contribution to negotiations on this issue, as well as for the submission of the report of the work carried out by the Working Group during the General Assembly's fifty-first session.

The debate and negotiations that took place during the three sessions of the Working Group held in 1997 covered, in a balanced way, the substantive and diverse issues included in both clusters, and demonstrated the complexity of this process of reform which, despite opposing interests, the vast majority of Member States hope will produce a Security Council that represents the current composition of the Organization and effectively responds to the future challenges of the United Nations.

The delegation of Cuba believes, however, that the report submitted by the Working Group is, in general terms, merely a useful reference document, as the proposals officially submitted to the Working Group by States or groups of States are annexed to it. However, it should be supplemented by an objective and impartial analysis of the positions articulated on this issue by Member States in various settings in this Organization.

Cuba reaffirms its support for the traditional position of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries on the matter of the reform of the Security Council, as ratified by the Ministerial Conference of the Movement held in New Delhi in March 1997, and the ministerial meeting held in New York in September of this year in the context of the general debate at the fifty-second session.

The continuing applicability and validity of the fundamental principles identified by the Non-Aligned Movement in the process of reforming the Security Council remain incontrovertible.

Cuba calls for the kind of reform and enlargement of the Security Council that would guarantee the necessary representation on this body of developing countries, improve and democratize the working methods and procedures of the Council, and promote the necessary transparency in the process of discussing issues and making decisions.

Reform and expansion of the Security Council must be carried out in strict compliance with the principles of sovereign equality of the States and of equitable geographic distribution, as enshrined in the Charter.

The concept of democratization, which is being applied today in other areas of the reform of the Organization, will also have to be applied to the reform and expansion of the Security Council. If, as is being preached, democracy is a criterion to be universally applied, we see no reason why that concept should be at variance with the effectiveness of an expanded Security Council.

The imbalance in the current membership of the Council extends to both categories of membership, and must be corrected. To this end, the number of both permanent and non-permanent members should be increased. In numerical terms, we reaffirm our support for a total of 26 members in an expanded Security Council, as identified by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

As expressed by the Non-Aligned Movement in its well-known "fall-back position", in the event that it proves impossible to arrive at agreement on increasing the number of permanent members, we should, for the time being, increase only the category of non-permanent members. However, the delegation of Cuba would reject any distorted interpretation of this formula that attempted to accommodate a "quick-fix solution", in whatever form.

Our delegation believes that the concept of "simultaneity" of access to an enlarged Security Council for all the new permanent or non-permanent members, without exception, continues to be a just, necessary and valid condition.

We believe that the issue of permanent regional representation must undergo further discussion and negotiation. It is well known that regional representation has proved to be rather effective with regard to issues such as candidacies for various bodies in the General Assembly and United Nations system. However, it remains to be seen whether it would be universally

accepted and effective if this approach were applied to the election of a reduced number of regional candidates that would, supposedly, represent the vast majority of the membership of the Organization and their regional neighbours in a body such as the Security Council, which has an international mandate and responsibility.

Democratization and transparency in the working methods and procedures of the Security Council continue to be cardinal elements for the process of reform of the Security Council. The delegation of Cuba would like to acknowledge the efforts made by some permanent members and, in particular, by the great majority of the non-permanent members of the Council, in their legitimate attempt to introduce certain improvements into the work of that body.

Today, as it did 50 years ago, the veto exceeds the limits of the technical implications of an alleged voting instrument, as it continues to be an anti-democratic and anachronistic right that affects and conditions both the decision-making process and the institutional nature of the Security Council, including the status of its members. In this context, Cuba believes that, despite the reluctance of those who have it and benefit from it, the right of veto must be examined in discussions within the two clusters on the reform and expansion of the Security Council, with a view to gradually limiting its use and, eventually, eliminating it completely.

The delegation of Cuba has given serious thought to possible scenarios for making decisions about and institutionalizing the process of reforming and expanding the Security Council, as well as the possible implications of this process for both the letter and spirit of the Charter of the Organization. In our view, the Charter contains provisions that are sufficiently clear with regard to the essence of the reform process that we are debating, and its implications for the institutional nature of the Organization. It would be regrettable if an attempt were made to interpret, restrictively or selectively, such provisions as, in particular, Article 108 of the Charter, which contains an unequivocal message designed to prevent the adoption of imposed and hasty decisions and to preserve the condition of the sovereign equality of all the Member States and the universal nature of the Organization.

Cuba believes that the balance of a generally acceptable and definitive decision on the process of reforming and expanding the Security Council rests, precisely, in the necessary general agreement that in our view is close to consensus and has the support of well over two thirds of the total membership of the Organization.

If we believe that the time for negotiation has arrived, let us negotiate; but let us do so without imposed deadlines, exclusionary formulas or discriminatory conditions. Cuba believes that we cannot speak of a credible reform process for the Security Council if we do not simultaneously move towards redressing the present imbalances and inequities in the composition of this body, achieving the necessary transparency in its work, and improving its working methods and its discussion and decision-making processes.

It would be impossible to talk of genuine reform of the Security Council if we tried to ignore the fact that in decisions adopted by members of the Security Council what comes into play is not just or supposedly, international peace and security, but also, and above all, the will and destinies of many other States that are equally sovereign and concerned about the purposes and principles of the Organization.

Mr. Campbell (Ireland): The position of Ireland, and a number of other small and medium-sized countries, on the principal issues of substance concerning the enlargement and working methods of the Security Council was circulated to the Open-ended Working Group earlier this year — almost exactly two years after they were first introduced as a contribution to the ongoing work of the Group. We were greatly encouraged by the number of delegations which, over the intervening period, seemed to share our approach. This was also evidenced in the informal private consultations undertaken by the Bureau of the Working Group at the beginning of the year.

It was against this background, but conscious of the need to capture what seemed to be the mainstream views on the most important issues of Security Council reform, that we decided to revisit our paper and recirculate it in the hope that it would encourage and contribute to a new momentum which many delegations sought. The paper can be found in annex III of the report of the Open-ended Working Group to the General Assembly [A/51/47].

The fundamental points of principle which Ireland believes must guide the reform of the Security Council have been articulated clearly by my delegation both at ministerial level and in our statements to the Working Group.

Ireland shares the view that an expanded but effective Council is one that not only ensures the representativity of the increased general membership, but takes into account new economic and political Powers and the under-represented regions of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.

We therefore continue to support a balanced enlargement in both the permanent and non-permanent categories of member. We are on record as supporting the election of Japan and Germany to permanent seats. We believe that appropriate candidates from the developing world with global influence and a capacity and willingness to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security can be identified. In one case in particular, a solution involving rotation is under active discussion.

We owe much to the quality of the contributions presented by many delegations in helping to advance our work during the fifty-first session. I would like to pay a warm tribute to the Vice-Chairs for their remarkable skill and tenacity in moving our work along. Their task was not an easy one, and they deserve our fullest respect and appreciation.

Towards the end of the fifty-first session, thanks in no small part to the considerable energies of the former President of the General Assembly, Ambassador Razali Ismail, a serious effort was made to see whether it would be possible to narrow the differences which remained on many of the key points. The presentation of a paper in the form of a draft resolution by him was a bold and imaginative step. The reactions which it elicited showed that consensus — always an ideal — was not possible at this stage and that the positions of principle in relation to issues such as size and composition of an expanded Council, as well as on the veto, made it clear that a solution likely to command broad endorsement was not yet within our grasp.

Let me offer just the following brief comments on two of these issues. First of all, an expanded Council consisting of no more than 21 members will not be enough. It will not offer us a way to produce a balanced addition of permanent and non-permanent members. It also seems clear that an increase in the number of non-permanent members alone will be not be acceptable to all.

On the veto, we are not persuaded that a way has been found for its satisfactory treatment. In our view, the extension of veto rights to new permanent members and their retention, without any limitation in scope or application, by the present permanent members would be a step backwards.

My delegation also has reservations about any formula which would take the veto question out of the negotiations and postpone further consideration to a time much further down the road. Much more thought and discussion now need to be focused on this issue. And one ingredient in this, in our view will be the level of votes in an expanded Council needed to produce decisions.

In last year's debate under this item, my delegation was not alone in suggesting that unless we were able to inject a new sense of momentum into the work of the Open-ended Working Group the process was in danger of running out of steam. We recognize that a serious effort was made to treat the substance of all the issues in greater detail over the past year, including an attempt to elaborate draft resolution language. Some useful progress was made, notably in the area of working methods and procedures of the Council.

Ireland is not opposed to continuing these discussions next year. It may be that other developments in the course of next year may lead to an atmosphere more conducive to successful negotiations. We continue to believe that greater political effort is needed to maintain the momentum towards reaching an agreement on this important reform issue.

Mr. Amer (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Our consideration of this important item takes place at the end of yet another stage of our intensive discussions on reform of the Security Council. Now, as we are about to embark on a new round of negotiations, we hope that this round will be more decisive in order to fulfil the mandate contained in General Assembly resolution 48/26 — that is, the restructuring of the Security Council to make it more representative in its membership, more democratic in its decision-making and more transparent in its working methods.

Over the last four years the Member States in this Assembly and in the Open-ended Working Group established by the Assembly have studied a number of proposals concerning enlargement of the membership of the Security Council. There is widespread support for an increase in the number of its members. Despite our firm conviction that a numerical increase in itself will not achieve the desired objective — that is, reform of the Security Council — my delegation finds that the

following developments have taken place in the membership of the United Nations in recent years: an increase of more than one third in membership since the last time the Council was expanded and a resultant need to correct the current imbalances in the configuration of the Council whereby some geographic groups are over-represented at the expense of other geographic groups, thus running counter to the provisions of the Charter, particularly Article 23. With these developments, my delegation could find justification for approving an increase in the Council's membership, but only in the non-permanent category. This is because, quite frankly, we do not need additional permanent members that would entrench the continuation of discrimination between the members of the United Nations. But if the broad majority considers that there is an actual and urgent need to increase the permanent membership, this must not be imposed by one of the permanent members of the Security Council and must not be selective at the expense of the interests of the developing countries. Moreover, the principle of equitable geographical distribution in membership of this category, must, in the first place, be adhered to, in order to give priority to the geographic groups that are not represented at all in the Council or that are minimally represented.

The new permanent members should not be chosen in a way that strengthens the monopoly of the powerful and the rich against the weak majority of the United Nations membership. We must concentrate all our efforts on improving the working methods and practices of the Security Council in the first place in order to reach a joint resolution whose elements are integrated in order to attain full sovereign equality among States, ensure transparency and accountability, and lay down the bases for democracy.

It is our position that Security Council reform is meaningless if the general United Nations membership cannot express its views and positions on matters with which it is concerned and which are pending before the Council — not after decisions have already been made behind closed doors, but in open public meetings that precede decision-making. The reform process will not be effective if the decision-making process of the Council continues to be so restricted, and in cases when it is monopolized by one State or a few States.

Arrangements must also be made to ensure the implementation of Article 31 of the Charter. Our experience with the Security Council makes the importance of this clear. Some States on the Council interpret this Article in a manner that is totally contrary to it in letter and spirit, and that does not enable us to exercise a right that is so clearly guaranteed to us by the Charter.

As could be seen from document A/51/47, the Non-Aligned Movement has declared its support for these proposals and has put forward several others that we support. The members of the Movement, supported by countries from outside its membership have tried, at earlier rounds of negotiations, to arrive at a consensus on these proposals. Only a very few States opposed the proposals, but their propositions did not convince us to retreat. Our hope has been bolstered that the will of the majority would prevail and that arrangements agreed by all will be arrived at, ensuring that the Security Council on one level would function in a democratic and neutral manner. On another level, we hope that rules would be established to ensure the establishment of better links between the Council and other organs of the United Nations, in particular the General Assembly, so that the Council becomes accountable to the Assembly in the latter's capacity as the only United Nations organ in which all States enjoy complete equality.

The veto power is an outdated practice. We shall not gain much if the reform process does not include a review of it. It is our view that there is no longer justification for maintaining that privilege, which has been manipulated so as to serve narrow national interests including protection from condemnation somehow legitimizing aggression. States which were victorious in 1945 arrogated to themselves special prerogatives which they denied to others. Today the United Nations is different from what it was 50 years ago. Perhaps the most important manifestation of that difference is that the majority of the Member States in this forum were not members of the Organization then, and had no say in what five States granted themselves as prerogatives. This is enough justification to lead us to only one conclusion, which is that the veto-power privilege must be abrogated. It runs counter to the principles of the Charter, foremost among them the sovereign equality of States. It also runs counter to the values of justice and undermines the principles of democracy. Above all, it is no longer acceptable for States to enjoy a prerogative that they exploit in order to consolidate their hegemony over the fate of the world and their control over the authority of international decision-making.

The report of the Working Group contained in document A/51/47 has provided us with information that enabled us to assess its work during the last session of the General Assembly. Ambassador Razali Ismail and his

Vice-Chairmen, the representatives of Thailand and Finland, deserve our great appreciation. The Group will continue its work during this session under your wise leadership, President Udovenko with the able assistance of your two Vice-Chairmen.

We hope that we shall not have to wait for too long before the Working Group arrives at a successful conclusion. Our position should not be construed as saying that we favour imposing a time-frame. We support allowing enough time for further consideration of this question by Member States. Here, we associate ourselves completely with the position of the Non-Aligned Movement as was stated at its twelfth ministerial meeting, and I quote:

> "While we recognize the importance of dealing with this question as a matter of urgency, no efforts must be made to decide the matter before arriving at a general agreement".

Mr. Gorelik (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): The question of the equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council remains the focus of attention of a large number of States. This is not an isolated matter but is rather an aspect of the key task of strengthening the United Nations, which nevertheless has particular significance and its own specific issues.

As a result of the discussions of the last four years, a growing consensus has been observed regarding the need to ensure that the expansion of the Security Council is judicious and rational, in order first and foremost to enhance the Council's effectiveness as the pivotal international organ for maintaining peace and security. The attainment of as broad an agreement as possible on all major issues remains a key pre-condition for finding a viable solution. Such an agreement would obviously entail the support of all the Council's permanent members, whose Charter-stipulated prerogatives must be preserved in their entirety. This is a matter of principle.

Further progress can be achieved only by the same path of laborious negotiations, which are imperative in finding a genuinely viable solution. This essential issue for the future of the United Nations must not hinge on the vicissitudes of the voting machinery. Russia fully shares the view, predominant in the United Nations, that a forced hastening of the discussion and negotiating process is unacceptable and that the imposition of arbitrary time frames is counter-productive. This view is reflected in the unanimous decision to continue the work of the General Assembly's Open-ended Working Group, which has not yet exhausted its potential. Our delegation will participate constructively in the Group's work, thus encouraging the collective search for a decision.

This, we emphasize, is the common responsibility of all Member States. Sound political logic and balanced reasoning are required from all of us, primarily with regard to the pivotal equation, that is, finding the golden mean between the level of representation on the reformed Security Council and the imperative need to ensure its effectiveness. We continue to believe that an increase in the membership of the Council should be minimal, so as not to have an adverse effect on its efficiency and effectiveness.

In principle, Russia is open to a number of specific ideas currently on the negotiating table, such as an expansion of the Council in both categories and the idea of rotating membership — provided such is the wish of the respective regional groups.

We are convinced that the most important thing is to make sure that the Security Council expansion is well-balanced and carries out the present project of increasing the developing countries' representation on the Council. We have already stated at a high official level that, objectively, Germany and Japan are real candidates for a reformed Council. It is also clear, however, that the attainment of a broad agreement with regard to the parameters of the expanding Council implies the granting of permanent seats to representatives of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

We share the opinion that the issue of granting the eventual new permanent members the right of veto should be considered after the specific "personal parameters" of the expanded Council have become clear.

In our view, proposals with regard to a periodic review of the Security Council membership have not yet been adequately elaborated and deserve more in-depth consideration. At this point, we have doubts that such reviews will really enhance the efficiency of the Council.

In conclusion, I should like to say that the problem of improving the methods and procedures of the Security Council's work, including its greater openness, remains a subject of serious consideration by the Open-ended Working Group. Here, there is also a need to provide for a realistic and phased approach to the delicate task of attaining genuinely viable innovations which are intended

to heighten the Council's efficiency and are based on the experience of a full-scale implementation of a number of significant measures which have already been taken recently.

Mr. Kasanda (Zambia): The item we have been seized of since yesterday is of vital importance to all of us gathered in this Hall. Maintenance of international peace and security is the responsibility of all peace-loving members of the international community. It is in this context that all of us hold vital stakes in the reform and expansion of the Security Council. It is also in this spirit that my delegation welcomes this full debate, which we hope will build a firm foundation for future compromises.

Mr. Jele (South Africa), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Since the adoption of resolution 48/26 on 3 December 1993 we have registered some level of progress on the complex question of reform and expansion of the Security Council. Since that time, concrete proposals have been made by various delegations. The major challenge facing us now is how to transform these diverse proposals into a general agreement on the basis of which a new structure of the Security Council, which all of us evidently desire to see, can be established and made to work for ourselves and posterity.

A key instrument for facilitating general agreement on the question of reform and expansion of the Security Council is the Open-ended Working Group. It is in this regard that my delegation welcomes the reappointment of Ambassador Breitenstein of Finland and Ambassador Jayanama of Thailand as Vice-Chairmen of the Open-ended Working Group. Their reappointments are a reaffirmation of the important contributions they have made in the work of the Working Group. We also welcome the fact that the Working Group will resume its work next month to build on the momentum towards progress which we hope will have been established by this debate.

The position of my delegation on the question of reform and expansion of the Security Council is elaborated in the Non-Aligned Movement and African positions which are already before us. The Permanent Representative of Egypt restated the position of the Non-Aligned Movement in his statement yesterday, which I fully endorse. In this regard, I will not attempt to re-state my delegation's position on this matter.

The recurring message from the statements of many delegations that have spoken on the issue of reform and expansion of the Security Council in the past two days is that we need to let the process of Security Council reform and expansion develop a dynamism of its own by promoting comprehensive consultations until general agreement is attained. As things stand now, there is no evidence of a general agreement to warrant pushing a decision at this stage of our consultations. Given this reality, we should not be tempted to rush the process artificially, because that would be counter-productive.

My delegation shares the view that when the Open-ended Working Group resumes work this coming January, it should undertake substantive consideration of the various proposals with a view to establishing common ground. This should, however, not circumscribe the introduction of new proposals. The durability of the Security Council of the future which we are striving to create will crucially depend on the diversity of inputs, because at the end of the day it will still be a small group of countries in the new Security Council that will be acting on behalf of the majority of the countries of the world.

Against this background, our work is more than reform and expansion of the Security Council. It is also a complex undertaking in confidence-building. We are all very familiar with the anxieties of some delegations on the ultimate effects of the bold decisions that we will be making on this question of reform and expansion of the Security Council. We have to find some ways and means of minimizing the risks involved and thereby eliminate those anxieties. This is another reason why the "quick fix" is not in the interest of the international community.

Let me end my brief statement by stating that because of the extreme importance of this exercise we would also like to echo the view that we need to comply faithfully with the provisions of Article 108 of Charter with respect to any resolution with Charter-amendment implications.

Mr. Hamdoon (Iraq)(*interpretation from Arabic*): I should like first to congratulate the two Ambassadors on their re-elections as Vice-Chairmen of the Open-ended Working Group on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council. We should also like to thank them for the efforts they have made and the wisdom they have displayed in leading the work of that Working Group.

There can be no doubt that the international climate and factors that prevailed when the United Nations was founded and its Charter drawn up have radically changed. Those changes will take new forms and will not be devoid of danger as we approach the dawn of a new millennium. That is why Security Council reform is both necessary and inevitable, if we want the Council to carry out its basic mandate with regard to the maintenance of international peace and security and strengthen the world order on behalf of all the world's States, especially given the disparities that exist on the international scene.

Indeed, some geopolitical groups, which represent the overwhelming majority of the world's countries, are not yet represented on the Security Council in a way that reflects their role on the international scene. Even stranger is the fact that the overwhelming majority of States represented in the General Assembly are subject to the will of a handful of privileged States on the Security Council with the right of veto. The question we must therefore ask when we talk about Council reform is the following: Why do we allow a handful of States to have such power over the fate of the overwhelming majority of States Members of the Organization, with no thought to the opinions of the latter States? Why is this small group of States constantly making repeated attempts to weaken and marginalize the General Assembly, the most representative and democratic body of the United Nations? Where is the consistency of this small group of States, which on the one hand calls constantly for democracy and sound management at the national level and yet, on the other hand, fails to respect those extremely important principles in its own relations with other countries at the international level, within the framework of the United Nations?

Indeed, this group of States members of the Security Council is insisting on imposing its will on the vast majority of Member States.

For many years the international community has continually acknowledged the need and the importance of reforming the Security Council. However, this goal is far from being realized, not because the majority of States do not wish for reform, but because certain permanent members of the Security Council do not want to lose the advantages and privileges they acquired as a result of historical circumstances of which we are all aware. We know that no Power wants to subordinate its vital interests to the prerogatives of the United Nations. Thus, these States do not want a strong, independent Organization. They simply want to strengthen and increase the Organization's credibility just enough to make it a more effective tool for them, a tool to serve their interests and international-policy objectives.

Further, any reform of the Security Council should take into consideration the concepts of solidarity and partnership that inspired the San Francisco agreements and on which the United Nations is founded.

We should therefore return to the spirit of San Francisco, do away with selfishness and unilateralism and leave off imposing conditions by force as part of an effort to change the rules of international relations within the United Nations and to consecrate the current class system and elitism of the Organization.

I would like here to express my support for the reform proposals made yesterday by the Egyptian Ambassador, Mr. Nabil Elaraby, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, as well as for the proposals made by the Arab Group, which were presented to the Working Group — in particular, the proposals relating to a permanent Council seat for the Group of Arab States, to be shared by the African Arab countries and the Asian Arab countries, following the rotation system, in addition to two other, non-permanent seats to be shared in the same way.

My delegation would like to highlight certain proposals for the reform of the Security Council that it believes are important. First, the reform process must respect the principles of democracy, equitable geographical representation and transparency. It is equally necessary to avoid temporary, hasty or partial reforms.

Second, we need to move beyond paying lip service to the fulfilment of the principles of the United Nations Charter, such as the sovereign equality of States and equality between States, large or small, rich or poor. Thus, we need to curtail the current elitist practices of the Security Council, bringing into line the club of powerful States that hold the right of veto within the Security Council, so as to pave the way for the elimination of this right, while at the same time strengthening respect for the principles and ideals of the United Nations. We should also pay due attention to the principle of accountability to the General Assembly.

Third, during the adoption of measures under Chapter VII of the Charter, we need to ensure that all peaceful and cooperative means of resolving conflicts have already been exhausted at both the regional and the

international level in accordance with the provisions of Chapter VI. And if we must have recourse to the measures outlined in Chapter VII, they must be applied collectively and equitably, in strict respect for the purposes and principles of the Charter and without allowing certain powerful States within the Security Council to impose these measures arbitrarily and unilaterally on targeted States.

Fourth, as regards the expansion of the membership of the Security Council, we support increasing the number of permanent or non-permanent seats in accordance with the principle of equitable geographical distribution.

Fifth, we must take a fresh look at the Security Council's procedures, including its routine activities, its provisional rules of procedure, the Charter Articles that delineate its powers, the Council's working methods and its relations with other United Nations bodies.

Sixth, it is of the utmost necessity to revise Article 41 of the Charter — which has given rise to abuses and arbitrary decisions by certain States — so that, in imposing sanctions, the Security Council is guided by clear-cut principles ensuring that these sanctions are appropriate to and commensurate with the threats to international peace and security. We also need to ensure that the duration of these sanctions is fixed and that they are governed by other rules that would prevent abuses under Article 41, so that they are not used to advance certain political interests that have nothing to do with international peace and security.

Seventh, we should restore the active role of the General Assembly in the maintenance of international peace and security and the settlement of international disputes before such matters are brought before the Security Council, because the Assembly is the supreme democratic organ in which all Member States are equitably represented.

In conclusion, we believe that the reform process of the Security Council is at a crossroads, and we must make a serious decision: either we see this process through by respecting the will of the overwhelming majority of Member States and consecrating the principles of equality, equity, partnership and cooperation laid down by the Charter, or we continue to rely on the use of double standards, the elitism and the closed-door policies that have so seriously damaged the Security Council's credibility and distanced it from the noble ideals established by the Charter.

Mr. Insanally (Guyana): The impressive number of delegations that have spoken so far in the debate on the issue of Security Council reform clearly shows that, although general agreement continues to elude us, there is no lack of determination on the part of the general membership to advance our consideration of this matter.

Caribbean Community (CARICOM) delegations, on whose behalf I have the honour to speak, fully share that determination and are ready, with an open mind, to resume the search for a more open, democratic and effective Security Council.

We acknowledge with appreciation the President of the Assembly's commitment to the task, and we will cooperate with him and our two distinguished and dedicated Vice-Chairmen, whom we were very pleased to see re-elected, to explore the various options that have been presented for our attention. While these have been very comprehensive in nature, it is not impossible that, given the fertility of our imaginations, there may be others that will arise as we continue our work. These, too, should be tested for their acceptability.

Apart from this reiteration of CARICOM's commitment to the process, it may be worthwhile at this stage of the debate, when there appears to be a stand-off on the fundamental issue of enlargement, to remind the Assembly of our own fundamental interests and concerns. These views will continue to inform our participation in the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council when it reconvenes in the new year to take up the matter once again.

What remains important for us — and I dare say for most, if not all, small States — is to have a Security Council that is open, democratic and effective. For relying as we do on this collective system for our own peace and security, we must be assured that the Council can provide reasonable and guaranteed protection for our sovereignty and territorial integrity. This consideration is of paramount importance to us, and we cannot and will not agree to any restructuring that does not satisfy this basic requirement. For us, therefore, the time and energy spent in the quest for an improved Council are very well worth it.

In our view, the current impasse — if I may call it that — results from the fact that for many in the Assembly the proposition of additional permanent

members remains an uncomfortable one. At a time when we are speaking of a more democratic United Nations, there are those who may not wish to be seen to be advocating an extension of privileged membership. However, in the face of this conundrum and the political realities which are at play, we have to find an agreement which is generally acceptable.

It may therefore be wise, as others have suggested, to slightly reorient our debate, even at this stage, and to discuss what form of Council would best serve the needs of the international community. Our discussions have always proceeded from the assumption that we cannot change certain elements of the Council and that therefore the road to the future is to merely tinker with the problem of geographical representation. However, the failures of the Council in the past few years, among them those in Somalia, Bosnia and Rwanda, point to the need for a more fundamental exploration of the role, composition and functioning of the Council.

Such an evaluation may, we believe, make it easier to decide whether the Council should be expanded in both categories or whether expansion should be confined to the non-permanent category. In the event that general agreement is reached on the desirability of expansion in the permanent membership, then we should seriously consider the criteria for such membership. Lost sometimes in the debate is the fact that permanent membership is not merely a privilege; permanent members have higher duties and obligations to the international community, on whose behalf they are supposed to act.

It may also be apposite to recall here that while the attention of the international community has focused on this issue largely from the perspective of the possible enlargement of the Council, enlargement will not by itself fully address the core issues of transparency in the Council's operation, its decision-making processes or the credibility of those decisions. A conscious and ongoing effort will have to be made to enhance these aspects. In document A/AC.247/1997/CRP.8 the Bureau of the Working Group has provided a solid foundation to guide our future discussions on what future improvements can be made and on how those arrangements can be institutionalized.

As to the relevance of Article 108 of the Charter to the outcome of our discussions — an issue which has featured prominently in this debate — let me just say that, in the light of the importance of Security Council reform, CARICOM States attach great significance to the language of resolution 48/26, which speaks of general agreement. While the phrase may lend itself to different interpretations, we believe that it reflects the Assembly's original intention to ensure that support for any proposed changes in the Council, even the simple suggestion that it be expanded in both categories, should at least be at the level required by Article 108. We may therefore wish to give this matter very careful consideration, since, in our view, none of us in the Assembly will be well served by a solution which does not enjoy the widest possible support.

Let me say in conclusion that, given the multitude and complexity of the issues involved in this exercise, we should not be at all astonished that on some points we will continue to have differences among ourselves, sometimes serious and seemingly intractable differences. Such differences, however, should not discourage us or lead us, worse yet, into uncivil discord among ourselves. Instead, we should take heart from the limited but nonetheless appreciable progress which we have made during the past four years and seek to resolve the remaining issues with due diligence and in a spirit of cooperation.

As always, CARICOM delegations are prepared to consider, against the background of our own stated principles and interests, whatever proposals seem to offer a reasonable and satisfactory solution. We very much hope that the interval between this debate and the reconvening of the Working Group in January next year can be used to lay the groundwork for a more congenial and productive dialogue that takes account of the interests and concerns of all Member States.

Mr. Dejammet (France) (*interpretation from French*): My statement will be brief. Its purpose is to reaffirm France's continued interest in the current work on the expansion of the Security Council. This endeavour, in which we have now been engaged for the last four years, must be successfully concluded.

France's position is unambiguous. We are in favour of an increase in the membership of the Security Council in the two existing categories. We are in favour of admitting Germany and Japan, as well as three countries of the South, to permanent membership, and support the creation of new non-permanent seats in order to improve the Council's geographic representation. We believe that in order not to jeopardize the ability of the Council to act rapidly and effectively, the total number of members should remain below 25. We are in favour of the new

permanent members' having the same prerogatives as the present members, while we are ready to work on drawing up any formula which would lead to general agreement. Moreover, we are ready to continue to pursue in a pragmatic manner the effort which has been under way for four years to make the working methods of the Security Council more transparent.

We believe that the work of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council during the fifty-first session has allowed us to make progress towards the achievement of general agreement. The approach proposed by President Razali entails proceeding in several stages. The first stage would be to decide on the framework for expansion. The second would be to decide on its implementation, in particular by electing the new permanent members. The third stage would be that of amending the Charter. This approach has the advantage of allowing sufficient time for agreement to emerge gradually — first on a framework and then on the names of the new members, including possible formulas for regional rotation. There is an opportunity to begin in earnest the process leading to expansion of the Council.

No one disputes the fact that the question of the membership of the Security Council is a pivotal aspect of the reform process of the United Nations. Agreement on expansion is therefore an indispensable aspect of any genuine reform. We need to set as an objective the conclusions of the negotiations, and the French delegation is ready to make a contribution to so doing.

Mr. Osman (Sudan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): As the General Assembly resumes its consideration of agenda item 59, I cannot at the outset fail to extend my thanks to President Udovenko's predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail, the Chairman of the Open-ended Working Group on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Council, and to his two Vice-Chairmen for their valuable efforts to achieve results in this connection.

We also would like to express our appreciation to the President for his determination to reach general agreement among all the members on this important subject without arriving at any partial and hasty solutions at this stage that may not embody the wishes of all States or even satisfy their aspirations.

The Working Group has focused seriously on its work for more than three years now. Many believe that it has not been able to make progress, and my delegation subscribes to this view. We appreciate the obstacles impeding its progress. My delegation believes that the major hurdle is the lack of political will on the part of the handful of States that do not want the Security Council to be more representative, in keeping with world changes that have taken place, the most important of which is the increase in the number of States Members of the United Nations.

As is well-known, in 1945, when there were only 51 Member States, the membership of the Security Council was only 11. When the number of States Members of the Organization rose to 117 in 1965, Council membership became 15. And now — as everyone knows — the number of States Members of the Organization has reached 185, while Council membership remains as it was more than 30 years ago. Is this in harmony with the principle of equitable representation? The answer is no, of course.

On the other hand, my delegation believes that the same handful of States that do not want the Council to become more representative do not even want to make the Council more just by improving its methods of work, so that it would be characterized by transparency and democracy, because this would prevent them from exploiting the Council to serve their narrow interests, as is currently true in many cases.

The question of reform of the Security Council is considered one of the most important and vital questions for all States. This is due to the very important role played by the Council in the maintenance of international peace and security and its repercussions for the peoples of the world. Thus reform of the Council must be handled in harmony with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the most important of which is the principle of the sovereign equality of States. The international community would thus have attained a valuable achievement in the reform of this international Organization in its entirety.

The reform of the Security Council must reflect and express the viewpoints of all States, large or small, rich or poor, so that the Council would truly be an organ entitled to act on behalf of all States, in accordance with paragraph 1 of Article 24 of the Charter of the United Nations, which states:

> "In order to ensure prompt and effective action by the United Nations, its Members confer on the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and agree that in carrying out its duties under this responsibility the Security Council acts on their behalf."

Action by the Council on behalf of Member States, as provided for in Article 24, cannot be true and credible unless through equitable representation — I repeat, equitable representation — for all States and through respect of their views regarding the reform process.

While discussing the reform of the Security Council, we must stress that the reform that we seek and are striving to achieve must include the concept of veto. In this respect, the delegation of the Sudan, like a majority of Member States, finds that the concept of the veto power runs counter to the principle of equality among States stipulated in the Charter of the United Nations. Thus that power must be abrogated. If it is difficult at present to do that, then we support the proposal that calls for confining this veto power and restricting its use only to matters coming under Chapter VII of the Charter until the political will can be mustered for its final abrogation.

My delegation considers that Security Council reform must also include the Council's methods of work. In this connection, we affirm the necessity of achieving transparency by reducing the number of informal meetings of the Council. It is well known that all its decisions are taken in informal consultations and in total darkness, and then publicly announced at an official meeting, which is usually pro forma.

In line with this, the delegation of the Sudan supports what has been said at previous meetings on the need to enable non-members of the Council that are concerned with questions before the Council, to take part in the informal consultations in order to achieve fairness.

In conclusion, the delegation of the Sudan would like to express its support for the position of the Non-Aligned Movement, which stresses the need to reach a general agreement with regard to all aspects of Security Council reform. This should be in the form of a package that would include expanding Council membership based on the principle of equitable geographical representation; improving its methods of work; and dealing with the question of the veto power. In order to realize an integrated reform, the sovereignty of States and their equitable geographic representation should be taken into consideration. This should be accomplished through a democratic negotiating process characterized by transparency and open-endedness. My delegation also confirms its commitment to the African position on the reform of the Council, as set out at the Harare summit.

Mr. Danesh-Yazdi (Islamic Republic of Iran): In contributing to the debate on the report of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Council, I would like to express my appreciation to the Chairman and the co-Vice-Chairmen of the Working Group, who during the fifty-first session of the General Assembly made a tremendous effort in guiding discussions, which they did with a great deal of patience. I would also like to associate my delegation with the statement made by Ambassador Elaraby of Egypt on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

Four years of in-depth, and sometimes hectic, discussions in the Working Group on various aspects of Security Council reform have plainly demonstrated the magnitude, intensity and complexity of the issues involved in this difficult process. There is little doubt that, because of deficiencies in its structure and its working methods, the Security Council needs to be appropriately and comprehensively reformed. To rectify those shortcomings is a formidable task which has to be carried out without the imposition of any time limit.

The nature and structure of the Security Council are so complicated that any hasty decision on reform could have long-term effects on international relations in general and on the United Nations system in particular. Hence, we are of the view that the general agreement of Member States is undeniably imperative for reform of the Council in all its aspects if the Security Council is truly to represent the entire membership of the United Nations. By "general agreement", we mean the agreement of almost all Member States, which is certainly far larger that the two-thirds majority envisioned by certain delegations.

During the various rounds of discussions and consultations in the Working Group, a number of proposals and views were expressed, relating in particular to the size and composition of a reformed Security Council. There is no doubt that the current composition of the Security Council is far removed from today's state of international affairs and is not acceptable to the

overwhelming majority of States Members of this Organization. The current imbalanced representation has seriously undermined certain regional groups' membership in the Council, which indeed diminishes the principles of representativity and legitimacy of the Council. We believe that any increase in the membership of the Security Council will have to take into account the true share of the developing countries, and their concerns. This should be addressed within the framework of equitable representation in the Security Council for all geographical groups. In our opinion, the present five regional groups are the sole legitimate groups within which the distribution of seats should be decided.

As a member of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, we would like to reaffirm the position taken by the movement that the Security Council should be expanded by no less than 11 seats. The argument that such an enlargement would adversely affect the efficiency of the Security Council is not convincing when the representativity and legitimacy of the Council in its present form is very open to doubt.

The expansion of the permanent membership has been the most controversial issue of all in the course of deliberations over the past four years. In the current circumstances, when there is extensive divergence of views on the expansion of permanent membership, an issue which understandably requires further deliberation, it may be prudent to address an increase in the number of non-permanent members as a first step.

In our opinion, the improvement of the working methods of the Security Council, dealt with in the Cluster II issues, should not be contingent upon the conclusion of the extensive and intensive discussions on Cluster I issues, which deal principally with the size and composition of the Security Council. The working methods and procedures of the Security Council, including its decision-making process, need to be reviewed in a thorough and comprehensive fashion. In this context, democratization, transparency and accountability are imperative if it is the intention that the Security Council should enjoy a truly universal character. Equally important is the participation of concerned parties in the relevant deliberations of the Council, including in its informal consultations. A broader application of Article 31 of the Charter would seem to remedy present shortcomings in this respect.

The question of the veto and its frequent misuse is obviously a matter of concern and a disgrace for 180 Members of this Organization. It is an unfair and anachronistic privilege, one that is inconsistent with the rule of law and even with common sense, as well as with many of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. We call upon the Working Group to seriously consider ways to curtail this discriminatory and unreasonable privilege as a first step towards its final elimination.

The Security Council functions on behalf of the general membership of the United Nations, and as such needs the full support of the General Assembly to fulfil its mandate effectively. The Security Council would attain this support and enhance its credibility were it to be forthcoming and responsive to the concerns expressed by the general membership, through the adoption of appropriate measures for democratization and transparency in its work and its communication with the General Assembly.

We look forward to the resumption of the work of the Open-ended Working Group on the reform and expansion of the Security Council, and express our readiness to participate actively in its deliberations during its upcoming session.

Mr. Gold (Israel): Israel follows with great interest the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council. The membership of the United Nations today is several times what it was at the inception of the Organization. States in areas and regions which had not yet attained independence in 1945 — or in 1965 for that matter — have been Members for many decades now. The Security Council, charged with the most important and urgent of the missions which this Organization undertakes, needs to reflect this reality so as to maintain both its effectiveness and its credibility.

The actual modalities for the expansion of the Council remain to be worked out. A variety of solutions to this issue are before us. Within this context I am constrained to point out, as my delegation has done on other occasions, that the current situation, whereby Israel remains ineligible for election to a seat on the Security Council as well as to other important bodies of and functions within the United Nations, is a matter of grave concern to us, as it should be to all those who uphold the principle of sovereign equality as enshrined in the Charter of the Organization.

The current system, whereby non-permanent seats on the Security Council are allocated to representatives of

regional groups, discriminates against Israel, the only State which is not, and indeed cannot become, a member of its own regional group. This is truly an injustice, and it does violence to the Charter of the United Nations both in word and in spirit. This injustice is ongoing and systemic and occurs here in this building on a daily basis. Its remedies are well known both to Members and to the Secretariat.

Moreover, I need not belabour all those present with a list of agenda items and resolutions in the United Nations dealing with issues of critical importance to the State of Israel. Suffice it to say that the United Nations sees fit to devote a relatively large part of its agenda to the Middle East and to the Arab-Israel conflict, while at the same time one of its main protagonists, Israel, is systematically denied almost any meaningful participation in the central decision-making apparatus of this Organization. This is truly a theatre of the absurd, and it does not play well to audiences beyond this Hall.

As the United Nations seeks to renew itself, it must be clear that there cannot be true reform so long as this anomaly is not dealt with promptly to redress this egregious form of institutionalized discrimination. We pursue only a modicum of fair play — fair play which behooves an Organization that does not fail to address every injustice, real or imaginary, that is brought to its attention.

Mr. Al-Otaibi (Kuwait) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The General Assembly is discussing one of the very important matters on its agenda, namely, the question of equitable representation on and an increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters. The report submitted within the framework of this item, in document A/51/47, is the product of the meetings of the Open-ended Working Group held during the previous session. In this connection, I would like to express our appreciation of and admiration for the great efforts made by the previous Chairman of the Working Group, Mr. Razali Ismail, the President of the previous session of the General Assembly, as well as the Vice-Chairmen, Mr. Breitenstein, the Permanent Representative of Finland, and Mr. Jayanama, the Permanent Representative of Thailand, for their distinguished steering of the deliberations of the Working Group.

The Working Group's discussions over the past four years highlighted the dire need for restructuring the Security Council and for bestowing more transparency on its working methods. All the working papers submitted to the Working Group by various States and regional organizations and groups have agreed on the importance of reforming the Council mechanism in order to enhance and support its role in maintaining international peace and security so that the Council would become more capable of facing the challenges of the next century.

However, despite the agreement of Member States on the principle of change and reform, the Working Group, in spite of its four-year deliberations, has not been able to reach general agreement on the nature of the requisite change with regard to the increase in the number of seats and the methods and practices of work to be pursued by the Council.

Nonetheless, the current situation does not prevent us from feeling optimistic. Reaching consensus is not impossible if there is a genuine desire to effect reform, away from narrow national interests that would not serve the continuity of the Council's performance of its functions in accordance with the requisite style and norm.

On a number of occasions, Kuwait has expressed its position as to the expansion of the Council and improvement of its working methods, whether unilaterally or through the regional groups. Perhaps today's General Assembly discussion of this question should be considered another opportunity favourable to confirming our position, which is based on the following.

First, Kuwait supports an increase in the membership of the Council provided that this increase would not be large, so that the Council can maintain its effectiveness and efficiency in decision-making when it comes to conflicts threatening international peace and security.

Secondly, an increase in Council membership should accord with the two principles — sovereign equality of Member States, and equitable geographical distribution, so that its new composition would reflect the universality of the United Nations.

Thirdly, in the case of general agreement to increase the number of permanent seats, we support a limited increase. Whoever is going to fill these seats should be States that have proven, in their relationship with the United Nations, their ability to discharge major responsibilities with regard to the maintenance of international peace and security. Such States should also possess an ability to realize the objectives and purposes of the United Nations in the various social, economic, cultural and political fields. Those States would be

elected by the General Assembly in accordance with the agreed-upon criteria and procedures.

Fourthly, concerning the reform of the Council and improving its working methods and evolving relationship with the other organs of the United Nations, particularly the General Assembly, we support all proposals aimed at bestowing more transparency and clarity on the Council's work. We feel that there should be a smooth flow of information to and from Member States. We think the working paper presented by the Non-Aligned Movement on 11 March 1997, which included a number of measures and constructive proposals in this respect, lays a good foundation for enhancing and supporting transparency and for evolving the work of the Security Council. In this context, we stress the importance of codifying the measures taken by the Council to improve its methods of work, as well the procedures that will be agreed upon by the Working Group. Such measures and procedures should be adhered to without waiting for an agreement on other matters, such as the composition and size of the Council and its decision-making.

Fifthly, Kuwait supports maintaining the machinery for electing non-permanent members to the Council, in accordance with paragraph 2 of Article 23 of the United Nations Charter. This would afford a greater chance to small States, including Kuwait, to gain membership in the Council and to take part in its work.

Sixthly, with respect to the veto power, the Working Group discussions demonstrated that there is near agreement on the importance of placing limits and controls on the scope of the use of the veto power. There are various proposals that merit consideration and study in this respect. We hope to reach a consensus formula that would satisfy all parties and would guarantee that the Council performs its functions without any obstacles.

In conclusion, we hope that the discussions of the Working Group will lead to consensus, which ensures the enhancement of the Security Council's role in the maintenance of international peace and security and enables the Council to face the challenges of the next century. To this end, my country will effectively take part in the forthcoming discussions of the Working Group.

Mr. Sychou (Belarus)(*interpretation from Russian*): Allow me to begin my statement by taking note that Belarus' position is in solidarity with those Member States who favour the principle of equitable geographical representation in the Security Council.

In our view, this approach is so important that it certainly could have been better reflected in the actual title of the General Assembly agenda item which we are discussing today. The formula based on geographical representation shifts the emphasis of the entire reform process towards a replacement of the former ideologized bipolar world by a new bipolarity of North-South, which runs counter to a balanced perception of the objectives which have been laid out, which take into account the interests of all geographic regions. As a result, correcting the imbalance that has developed in the present membership of the Security Council will inevitably encounter difficulties, since no account is taken of the will and desire of the absolute majority of Member States to overcome this shortcoming, among others. The Working Group should also focus its attention on this issue, and we support the proposal for the continuation of its work.

Belarus is among the countries that are in favour of balancing interests on the basis of compromise and are trying to find mutually acceptable approaches to creating an effective, more democratic and more active Security Council. In our view, the success of further negotiations on reforming the Security Council, and on the timetables and methods for doing so, will depend to a great extent on three factors: political will, the absolute clarity of positions, and the willingness to balance the interests of all parties to the negotiating process. At the same time, we believe that since this important process and the nature of its final results will to a great extent shape the world as it enters the twenty-first century, the approaches must be very carefully adjusted and weighed. There is no room for unjustified haste in taking decisions that will be irreversible.

Issues of expanding the membership of the Security Council and restructuring its methods of work, and the question of the right to the veto, are integral components of the reform of the Security Council, and in our view they should be included in one package. Last year a considerable number of new ideas and proposals were put forward, many of which — those of the Non-Aligned Movement, Belgium, Italy, Germany, Japan, the United States and many others — were the subject of keen interest and the constant focus of attention among the participants in the discussion, although they evoked various reactions. These proposals impressed us by the attention they paid to the interests of the Eastern European Group, whose membership, as is known, has grown since the last expansion of the Security Council, particularly in recent years, to more than twice its

previous size. We are satisfied by the support that the Eastern European Group has received from other regional groups in the context of the search for a way to expand the membership of the Security Council. The logic is precise and clear: no approach can be viable if the attempt to achieve the objectives of certain regional groups ignores the interests of other groups or is conducted at their expense. In that context, we should again like to reaffirm our position with regard to making room for the Eastern European Group within the new structure of the Security Council.

We understand that bringing the structures and methods of work of the Security Council into line with new realities means, first and foremost, taking account of the increase in the total number of United Nations Member States, eliminating the imbalance in the representation of geographical regions in that body and bringing the countries of Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe and Latin America up to the level of the maximum regional representation in the Security Council today. The interests of the developing countries and countries with economies in transition — and it is precisely among them that membership has increased — must be adequately reflected in the reform and expansion of the membership of the Security Council. We are convinced that the developing countries can make a substantive contribution to the work of a renewed Council as permanent members, and here we believe that India is a worthy candidate.

At the same time, the protracted nature of the search for consensus on the entire package of problems related to the reform of the Security Council is increasingly creating grounds for arguing that in order to give the process a practical impetus it should be initiated with those elements that enjoy the widest support of Member States. Otherwise, reform will not move forward.

Our delegation attaches great significance to improving the Security Council's methods of work and decision-making mechanisms and enhancing the transparency of its procedures. We note with satisfaction certain recent improvements in this regard allowing Member States to receive more complete and operational information on the activities of the Council. Positive changes have been noted, in particular, in the attitude towards preparing the report of the Security Council, the switch to the practice of approving drafts at open meetings, and supplementing the report with short assessments of the Security Council's work by the outgoing President, at the end of each month. We hope that all this will ultimately lead to improvements in the substantive part of the report of the Security Council by making it more analytical, by supplementing it with references to the difficulties encountered by the Council in adopting decisions and resolutions, and by summarizing the basic results of its work in a given area.

We believe that the report of the Security Council could be further improved by introducing a procedure for the submission of the report of the Security Council either by its President or, on the basis of rotation, by one of the permanent members of the Council at each session of the General Assembly. That would enhance the level of concrete interaction between the General Assembly and the Council and the degree of involvement not only of the Secretariat but also of the members of the Council in the process of preparing the report on its activities. It would also be improved by introducing a statement in reply by the President of the Council or one of the five permanent members, on a rotational basis, after the conclusion of the discussion in the General Assembly of the report of the Security Council, which could serve as a preliminary response to the proposals and recommendations of the Member States.

We support the concept of an interim solution regarding the veto by gradually restricting and codifying the scope of its use, on the understanding that this question must be resolved solely on the basis of consensus. We see this as a demonstration of further democratization, which is in the interests of all Member States. From that viewpoint, the advisability of changing the nature of the relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly is clear.

We also believe that it is essential for the Security Council to hold more open meetings and information briefings and to make all available documentation accessible to all Member States, on whose behalf the Security Council is acting. Among further measures designed to improve interaction between the Security Council and Member States, it would be advisable to consider the possibility of the effective preparation of and transmission to Member States — for example, by electronic mail — of press releases on the results of the informal consultations of the Security Council, meetings of the sanctions committees and summaries by the President of the Security Council of the results of informal consultations with contributing countries within the framework of peacekeeping operations.

In conclusion, we hope that, with regard to the future work of the Working Group, the aspects we have

mentioned regarding the expansion of the membership of the Security Council will be further examined. For our part, we are ready to continue to cooperate constructively with other delegations with a view to achieving our shared goal of ensuring a balanced approach to the process of expanding the Security Council.

Mr. Calovski (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia): I would like to make a brief general statement on the item before us. My delegation took an active part in the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council, endeavouring to contribute to the efforts to find an acceptable solution to an important issue before the United Nations. In the Group's meetings we explained our views and made some specific oral proposals, which are on the negotiating table. When the Working Group meets next year, we shall submit them in the form of a conference room paper.

My delegation is strongly in favour of the following positions. First, the present international political reality favours an increase in Security Council membership, both in the permanent and the non-permanent categories. In our view, the General Assembly should elect 15 non-permanent members: five from Africa, four from Asia, two from Western Europe, two from Eastern Europe and two from Latin America.

Second, the increase in Security Council membership should be acceptable to Member States' Parliaments.

Third, the use of the veto should be limited. The foundation of Security Council decisions should be the maturity of the arguments and the effort to reach consensus, in strict compliance with the purposes and principles of the Charter.

Fourth, the non-permanent members of the Security Council should be elected on a predictable basis. Each Member State has a duty under the Charter to serve on the Security Council and should be enabled to do so.

Fifth, the Security Council should adequately organize its preventive activities for peace.

Sixth, the work of the Security Council should be fully transparent.

Seventh, the reform of the Security Council sh be seen as an indivisible part of the reform of the U Nations.

The role of the General Assembly should strengthened. It should start to work continuously, national Parliaments, and every year there should session of Heads of State and Heads of Governme the summit of the United Nations.

I hope that next year the Working Group wi more productive than was the case this year.

Mr. Wilmot (Ghana): In previous statements, delegation has stressed the need to enhance the credib of the Security Council through a substantive re guided by the principles of democracy, the sover equality of States and equitable geograph representation. The reformed Security Council shoul transparent in its activities and more responsive t interests of the general membership in matters deri from its Charter mandate. This is even more so a Members of the United Nations are called upon to s the burden of the maintenance of international peace security through, *inter alia*, assessed contributions t peacekeeping budget and the provision of troops United Nations peacekeeping missions.

The unjust imbalance in the Council's pre composition can no longer be justified in this post-c war era, when the winds of democratic change blowing through all regions of the world. The decl support of this Organization for democratic norms governance in our countries cannot be taken seric while a select few continue to resist democratic chan the Organization itself.

An increase in the membership of the Counc necessary to redress the current unacceptable situa and improve the Council's representation, with regard to the tremendous increase in the ov membership of the United nations and developmen the international arena over the past two decades.

Our views for the achievement of equi geographical representation in the Council have clearly defined in the Non-Aligned Movem statements and working papers presented to the C ended Working Group entrusted by this Assembly the mandate to consider and report on all aspects o question of increase in the membership of the Sec Council and related matters. These views were reite

only yesterday by the Permanent Representative of Egypt, speaking on behalf of the States members of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Movement has called for an increase in the Council's membership by not less than 11 seats. This additional number is fair and reasonable and can accommodate the legitimate claims of all regions of the world to be represented in the all-important body entrusted with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The expansion of both the permanent and the non-permanent categories of the Council, as recommended by the Non-Aligned Movement and several other delegations, will go a long way towards meeting our objectives and responding to the requirements of the vast majority of Member States. It is only through the expansion proposed by the Non-Aligned Movement that the views expounded by the vast majority of Member States can be accommodated without impairing the efficiency of the Council.

We also wish to reaffirm the subscription of our country to the common African position which calls for the allocation of two permanent rotating seats to the continent, with the same prerogatives and privileges as are accorded to all other permanent members, old and new. In this connection, the Organization should avoid the creation of a new underprivileged class, as this can only mask the problem we are seeking to address.

It may be understandable that our continent was not considered for permanent Council membership at the inception of this Organization in 1945, when, for the most part, the continent was still reeling under the yoke of colonial rule and hence was under-represented in San Francisco. In 1963 it was clearly an injustice that no African country was considered for permanent membership. At the dawn of a new millennium, we cannot afford to entrench this anomaly and continue to exclude from permanent membership over one third of the membership of this Organization, which is proving beyond all doubt its willingness and ability to actively participate in the endeavours of the international community in the domain of international peace and security.

Any attempt to minimize the strength of Africa's justified claims can only perpetuate the stalemate that threatens to consume our efforts. It would also fail to satisfy the desire of this Assembly for equitable representation on the Security Council, a prominent feature of the mandate assigned to the Open-ended Working Group dealing with the subject, as expressed in its very appellation.

Needless to say, my delegation disagrees completely with those delegations which call for a maximum size of 20 or 21 for the enlarged Security Council. Those calls either aim at setting a new mandate for the Open-ended Working Group, or could be a ploy to have the best of two irreconcilable worlds, supporting expansion and equitable representation in one breath while in another advancing proposals knowing that they stand very little chance of obtaining a general agreement, a prerequisite for Charter amendment as stipulated in Article 108.

We share the eagerness of those delegations which have expressed the wish to see this Assembly move earnestly forward in its consideration of the question of Security Council reforms. However, we believe in the need to make haste slowly, or *festina lente*, as the Romans of old used to say. Any rush to premature conclusions could only further polarize the membership of the Organization, leaving the vast majority of Member States disillusioned and even more alienated from the Security Council than they are now.

Should it become necessary, however, to take some early decisions, a leaf could be borrowed from the Non-Aligned Movement, which has proposed that expansion take place only in the non-permanent category for the time being, if there is no agreement on other categories of membership.

The proposal for a periodic review of the composition of the Council has great merit and deserves serious consideration. Such periodic review, with the possibility of replacing non-performing members or any member, as may be decided by its regional constituents, would enhance accountability and make the Council more responsive to the needs and interests of the international community at large. We wholeheartedly subscribe to this proposal.

My delegation also recognizes the inherent problems associated with the use and abuse of the veto, and we reiterate our call for the limitation of its usage to clearly defined situations under Chapter VII of the Charter, pending agreement, at an appropriate time, on its total abolition. The time has come to review the concept of the veto, an undemocratic and anachronistic relic of the post-war era, in view of its frequent misapplication by a privileged few in furtherance of parochial national objectives, thwarting the will of the general membership

of the Organization. Whatever the outcome of our deliberations on this subject, it is my delegation's considered view that all permanent members, new and old alike, should be accorded the same privileges and prerogatives.

I wish to conclude be reiterating my delegation's commitment to the reform process. We stand ready to continue in our common effort to reform the Security Council in order to prepare it better for the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Mr. Kim Chang Guk (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): The reform of the United Nations has today become a crucial issue related to the destiny of the Organization. The whole process of deliberations on United Nations reform during the last four years clearly shows that the United Nations should be restructured in conformity with the demand of the present times if it is to best serve humankind as the only universal international Organization in the twenty-first century, after the end of the cold war.

As indicated in its report to this session [A/52/47], the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform had in-depth deliberations on the reform on the basis of detailed proposals submitted by individual countries and groups. Accordingly, it can be said that those discussions were comparatively substantial and open. However, to our regret, no concrete and reasonable solutions as to how the Security Council should be reformed have so far been found.

The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has consistently maintained that the reform of the Security Council should be undertaken in order to make it reflect fully the will of developing countries, who make up the majority of the United Nations membership, and enable them to exercise their sovereign rights on an equal footing.

The General Assembly, in which all United Nations Member States are equally represented, has been relatively democratized compared to the Security Council. However, its authority has been severely restricted.

In contrast, the Security Council lacks democracy to a great extent, though it enjoys a powerful authority. The present composition of the Council's permanent membership does not fully represent the developing countries which form the overwhelming majority of the United Nations membership, and the non-permanent membership does not ensure geographical balance, either.

Consequently, more often than not we have witnessed a lack of impartiality and justice in the activities of the Security Council, in the past and in the present. This has also created an impression that the Council is being abused by big powers for their own political purposes, which is contrary to the Council's fundamental mission to maintain international peace and security. This impairs the image of the United Nations.

Therefore, efforts to reform the Security Council should focus first on turning it into a democratic organ, in which all Member States can exercise the same rights on an equal footing, and on improving its present working method, which is now based on the high-handedness and privileges of a few countries, so that the Council can make a real contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security.

My delegation wishes to take this opportunity to reiterate its position on the reform of the Security Council. At the present stage, the expansion of non-permanent and permanent membership should be discussed separately, giving precedence to discussion of the former, upon which Member States can easily agree.

As the whole process of previous discussions has shown so far, a general agreement seems possible with regard to the expansion of the non-permanent membership. However, with regard to expansion of the permanent membership, it is very hard to predict whether any agreement can be reached, owing to the fundamentally different views that still exist among Member States. Under these circumstances, simultaneous discussion of the expansion of the permanent and non-permanent membership will be unrealistic, as it may simply prolong the debate for an unlimited period.

The expansion of the permanent membership should be discussed in the next stage. In this regard, it is important to determine the number of new permanent seats in such a way as to correct the present imbalance in the composition of the permanent membership so that the developing countries may be fully represented.

If the permanent membership is composed mainly of developed countries for the efficiency and effectiveness of the Council, without taking present realities into consideration, the imbalance in the composition of the permanent members will be further aggravated and impartiality in the activities of the Security Council can never be ensured.

The overemphasis certain countries put on the efficiency and effectiveness of the work of the Security Council while they talk about the expansion of its membership shows that they are not interested in eliminating the imbalance in the Security Council membership. In this respect, my delegation is of the view that it is necessary to consider the proposed idea of admitting two countries from the developed world and three countries from the developing world to permanent membership in pursuit of eliminating the imbalance of the Council.

This proposal gives the impression that the developed countries are afforded special treatment while the developing countries, which represent the majority of the United Nations membership, are discriminated against and marginalized. Deliberations should therefore continue, giving careful consideration to the numerous proposals now before us, until a common proposal emerges reflecting the interests of all Member States.

In fact, the expansion of the permanent membership deserves serious consideration because it is a process of selecting some countries to be more privileged than others, which will have a profound impact on international relations. Therefore, it is crystal clear to everyone that it cannot be decided easily. In particular, it is necessary to distribute the new permanent seats to the respective regions on the basis of the principle of equitable geographical representation, which is now applied with regard to the elections to the principal organs of the United Nations.

Mr. Nakkawita (Sri Lanka): My delegation is honoured to participate in the General Assembly debate on agenda item 59, "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters". We are especially privileged to do so during the presidency of Ambassador Udovenko and to acknowledge his untiring efforts to conduct this debate in a conducive atmosphere.

The exercise in Security Council reform entered a landmark phase during the presidency of the preceding President, Ambassador Razali Ismail, to whom my delegation wishes to pay a special tribute. We are mindful of Ambassador Razali's strivings to obtain a result, which unfortunately eluded him. We hope that during the current President's tenure this vexed subject will move towards a successful outcome.

My delegation also wishes to record its appreciation of the efforts made by the Co-Vice-Chairmen of the Open-ended Working Group, Ambassadors Breitenstein and Jayanama, and is happy to note that they will continue to steer the destinies of the Working Group when it convenes next year.

At the outset, my delegation wishes to associate itself with the statement made by the Ambassador of Egypt in his capacity as the Coordinator of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries on the reform and expansion of the Security Council.

This is the fourth year that the General Assembly is debating the question of Security Council reform, having established the Open-ended Working Group for this purpose by General Assembly resolution 48/26 in 1993. Sri Lanka is among the group of 10 countries that brought the question of Security Council reform to the agenda of the General Assembly back in 1979. The rationale for the engagement of our countries in this exercise is the perception that the Security Council as at present constituted does not reflect the reality of the present-day world. It represents a world that existed in 1945, a surmise that is itself questioned by some.

The world has significantly changed since then, and today the United Nations comprises 185 sovereign States. It is patently clear that a Security Council of 15, among which five are permanent members with the right of veto, cannot speak on behalf of such a large number of countries which remain outside its pale. The large mass of developing countries is under-represented in the Council, and none among them has obtained the status of a permanent member. Apart from this, there are other countries that have emerged on the world scene today which are capable of contributing or have the potential to contribute significantly to the task of maintaining peace, security and good order in the world. These roles can be political or economic. The Security Council will be richer and stronger with the regular participation of these States in its work. In their absence, the Security Council in today's world can be claimed to be an anachronism that needs to be changed or reformed.

It must be acknowledged, however, that most of us feel very strongly that in reforming the Security Council we should not be hasty and should tread with the utmost caution. Having created an anachronism and an inequality, the world can ill afford to replace it with further inequality and an unjust mechanism. This is why groups like the Non-Aligned Movement have insisted that there should not be any imposed time-frame for arriving at a solution. We are aware that, once created, the new

system will be with us for a very long time. It is imperative, therefore, that utmost care be taken to obtain a consensus or a general agreement, as the draft resolution on Council reform puts it, before a decision is taken. At the same time, it is necessary to make progress, and the Non-Aligned Movement has itself insisted therefore that the reform of the Security Council is a matter of urgency. Thus, it is necessary for us to move, but the importance and urgency has to be tempered with circumspection if we are to carry with us the large majority of the States in reaching general agreement on this subject.

My delegation believes that the proposals reiterated by the Non-Aligned Movement, which were echoed in the statement of its Coordinator, the Ambassador of Egypt, provide the best basis for us to proceed in achieving results in this reform exercise. These formulations are well known and need no repetition. We must however, bear in mind that the ministers of the Non-Aligned Movement themselves took the position that these are subject to review and are not fixed or universal positions. As in everything else, the formulations will have to take note of the fast- developing and evolving scenario. Further proposals of the Non-Aligned Movement have to be looked at in the context of the spirit in which they were made. It has never been the intention of the Non-Aligned Movement to block or stifle reform, and its proposals should not be allowed to be interpreted in that light.

Sri Lanka wishes to see the Security Council expanded in both the permanent and non-permanent categories. Such an expanded Council should have a membership of around 26, as the Non-Aligned Movement proposals envisage, to make it legitimate and representative. We do not believe that an increased membership up to this number will necessarily make the Council less effective or less efficient. The expanded Council should provide for a greater representation of developing countries belonging to the Non-Aligned Movement. The principle of equitable geographic representation and the sovereign equality of States should be upheld in relation to the membership of the Council. We believe that the working methods of the Council should be transparent and subject to greater democratization. We also support the Non-Aligned Movement position that the decision-making process should be democratized, and the use of the veto should be confined for a start to those subjects covered by Chapter VII of the Charter. All these elements should be dealt with as a comprehensive package, as they are all of equal importance and significance.

We have decided to address the question of Security Council reform early next year, when the Working Group will be reconvened. Although there are many difficulties and divergent positions, optimism should not be shed altogether. Looking back on the four years spent, one cannot say that the time has been ill spent. We must recognize that there has been progress, particularly during the last General Assembly session when discussions became structured, focused and purposeful. Serious consultations were conducted, out of which certain postulates emerged, reflecting the thinking of a large majority of countries. From these exercises emerged certain positions that were in the papers that came out at the time. Although they did not receive general agreement, they pointed in a certain direction and perhaps indicated the way forward towards building a consensus.

When it opens its deliberations next year, the Working Group will have this background to anchor its proceedings, and in that sense it will not be starting its work in a void. We will have to obtain the best possible result if we are to do justice to the efforts made by so many in the last four years. A perfect solution is never available, and we will have to concentrate on the best achievable reality. The idealism that we all harbour in our minds for a perfect Security Council needs to be tempered with realism. We will need to make compromises and be flexible. For those who have been unwilling to share power, concessions on that score will be an unavoidable option.

It is in this spirit that my delegation hopes to participate in the deliberations of the Working Group next year.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.